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Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

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Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly at its twenty-second special session, a letter addressed to him by the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), to which is annexed a Ministerial Declaration on Agriculture in Small Island Developing States, adopted by a Special Ministerial Conference held at FAO headquarters in Rome on 12 March 1999, and a Plan of Action on Agriculture in Small Island Developing States, which was developed at the request of the FAO Conference at its twenty-ninth session and endorsed by the FAO Council at its one hundred and sixteenth session.

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Annex

Letter from the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

At the request of the FAO Council at its one hundred and sixteenth session, held at FAO headquarters in Rome from 14 to 19 June 1999, I have pleasure in submitting to you the Plan of Action on Agriculture in Small Island Developing States for consideration by the special session of the General Assembly for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (27–28 September 1999).

This Plan of Action on Agriculture in Small Island Developing States was developed at the request of the FAO Conference at its twenty-ninth session (7–18 November 1997). A draft of the Plan of Action was discussed by a Special Ministerial Conference on Small Island Developing States held at FAO headquarters on 12 March 1999, and a revised version of it was subsequently endorsed by the FAO Council at the one hundred and sixteenth session mentioned above. In addition, the Ministerial Conference adopted a Ministerial Declaration on Agriculture in Small Island Developing States, which serves as an introduction to the Plan of Action (see appendix).

The Plan of Action on Agriculture in Small Island Developing States complements the Barbados Programme of Action by focusing on five commitments related to the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors, namely:

- Adjusting to changes in the global trading environment;
- Moving towards a more intensified, diversified and sustainable agriculture;
- Meeting fisheries needs;
- Ensuring sustainable management of land, water and forestry resources and environmental protection;
- Capacity-building and institutional strengthening.

As stated in the Declaration, the Special Ministerial Conference acknowledged the central place of the 1994 Barbados Plan of Action and recognized that the results of the Ministerial Conference would make an important contribution to the international effort and work of the United Nations in addressing the special needs and problems of small island developing States.

I should appreciate it if you would submit the Plan of Action to the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly to be held in September 1999.

(*Signed*) Jacques **Diouf**

Appendix

Special Ministerial Conference on Agriculture in Small Island Developing States

(Rome, 12 March 1999)

Ministerial Declaration on Agriculture in Small Island Developing States

1. We, the Ministers of Agriculture, Plenipotentiaries and Representatives of countries participating in the Special Ministerial Conference on Agriculture in Small Island Developing States, convened by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), meeting in Rome on 12 March 1999, recognize the specific constraints of small island developing States and reaffirm our commitment to address their particular needs and our determination to support the sustainable development in small island developing States as a follow-up to the World Food Summit.

2. We acknowledge that small island developing States and low-lying coastal States (small island developing States) vary widely with respect to distinct characteristics, such as natural resources endowments for agriculture, forestry and fisheries, levels of economic development, role of the agricultural sector in the economy, competitiveness in agricultural markets and socio-cultural situations.

3. We also note that small island developing States face common constraints arising from the interplay of factors such as smallness, remoteness, geographic dispersion, vulnerability to natural hazards and peculiar population structure and mobility. We further recognize the vital importance of agriculture, forestry and fisheries and the vital role played by women in those activities, which provide the main source of livelihood, as well as the major revenue for many small island developing States.

4. Acknowledging the central place of the 1994 Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, we recognize that the results of this Special Ministerial Conference will make an important contribution to the international effort and the work of the United Nations in addressing the special needs and problems of small island developing States.

5. Reaffirming our common determination and strong commitment, expressed during the World Food Summit, we pledge to pursue our efforts towards the achievement of food security and to implement development policies and programmes which secure the sustainability of agriculture, forestry and fishery sectors in small island developing States.

6. We recognize the important role played by FAO in assisting small island developing States in the development of national capacity through normative and complementary field programmes in agriculture, forestry and fisheries of FAO.

7. We have considered the draft Plan of Action on Agriculture in Small Island Developing States, attached to the present Declaration, as a basis for further consideration by appropriate bodies of FAO and other relevant bodies of the United Nations system. We will endeavour to:

(a) Address new challenges in the global trading environment; undertake short-term adjustments; and improve competitiveness in agricultural exports;

(b) Move towards more intensified, diversified and sustainable agriculture in order to: create an enabling environment for agricultural intensification and diversification; remove production constraints; and improve domestic and export marketing and processing;

(c) Meet fisheries needs in order to: improve exclusive economic zones fisheries conservation and management; enhance aquaculture development and inland fisheries; and improve post-harvest fish management, marketing and processing;

(d) Ensure sustainable management of land, water, and forestry resources and environmental protection in order to: promote the conservation and sustainable use of land and water resources and manage sustainably the forest resources; enhance environmental protection; and improve disaster preparedness;

(e) Build and/or strengthen national capacities and institutions to: accommodate and take advantage of the new international trade regime; strengthen support services to agriculture, forestry and fisheries; and provide a coherent framework for sustainable natural resource management and environmental protection.

8. We pledge to foster the Plan of Action on Agriculture in Small Island Developing States through effective and appropriate use of existing international programmes and institutional arrangements.

9. We invite the Director-General of FAO to submit, as early as possible, a developed version of the draft Plan of Action on Agriculture in Small Island Developing States to the FAO Council.

Plan of Action

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Preamble

1. The twenty-ninth session of the FAO Conference, held from 7 to 18 November 1997 stressed the need to recognize the particular constraints of small island developing States and invited the Organization to consider the possibility of organizing an International Conference on Agriculture in Small Island Developing States as part of the World Food Summit follow-up (paras. 45 and 53, C97/REP).

2. The FAO Council, at its one hundred and fifteenth session held in November 1998, stressed the need for special attention to small island developing States; welcomed the preparation for the Special Ministerial Conference on Agriculture in Small Island Developing States in 1999; and appealed to donors for generous support to the organization of the Conference.

3. Earlier, the Inter-regional Conference of Small Island Countries held in Barbados, in April 1992, recommended that the small island countries seek opportunities to meet again with a view to implementing the programme areas of Agenda 21 to be agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 47/189 of 22 December 1992, decided to convene a Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which was held in Barbados, in April 1994.

4. The States which participated in the Global Conference affirmed, *inter alia*, that there was an urgent need in small island developing States to address the constraints to sustainable development, including scarce land resources; inordinate pressure on coastal and marine environment and resources; and limited means available to exploit natural resources on a sustainable basis. Since then, a number of related events have taken place at both the international and regional levels. For example, in May 1996, a Technical Consultation on South Pacific Small Island Developing States on Sustainable Development in Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, was held in Apia, Samoa, where commitments were made to provide special assistance to Small Island Developing States, particularly within the framework of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which resulted from the 1994 Global Conference. A donor conference with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) was held from 24–26 February 1999.

5. The United Nations General Assembly at its nineteenth special session, held in June 1997, made decisions on the modalities for the full and comprehensive review of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The General Assembly, by its resolution 52/202, of 18 December 1997, reaffirmed the commitment of the international community to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. It also decided that the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in April 1999 would serve as a preparatory meeting for a special session of the General Assembly in September 1999 which would undertake an in-depth assessment and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action. The organization of the Ministerial Conference on Agriculture in Small Island Developing States and the present Plan of Action represents, therefore, a major contribution to these efforts undertaken by the United Nations to address the particular needs of these countries. By focusing on the specific problems of agriculture, including fisheries and forestry, the Conference deals with a sector that has a key role to play in achieving sustainable food security in the framework of economic and social development.

6. At the World Food Summit, held in November 1996 at the invitation of FAO, heads of State and Government pledged their political will and common and national commitment to achieving food security for all and to an ongoing effort to eradicate hunger in all countries. They acknowledged the fundamental contribution to food security by women, particularly in rural areas of developing countries, and the need to ensure equality between men and women. They recognized the importance for food security of sustainable agriculture, fisheries, forestry, trade and rural development in low as well as high potential areas and called for particular attention to be paid to those countries affected by natural disaster or climate-related ecological changes. They were conscious of the need for urgent action to combat pests, drought and natural resource degradation, including desertification, overfishing and erosion of biological diversity.

7. As pointed out in the Plan of Action of the World Food Summit, small island developing States face the threat of land loss and erosion, owing to climate changes and sea level rises, and have particular needs for their overall sustainable development. Improvements in trade, transportation, communication, human resources, stabilization of income and higher export earnings will increase food security in those countries.

8. In spite of their diversity, small island developing States share common constraints that impede their efforts to develop the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors, while preserving their environment. Among the constraints are

fragile ecosystems, vulnerability to natural hazards, poor communication facilities and dependence on external economic factors. On the other hand, most island States have the potential to gradually diversify their economies for export and import substitution, for tourism and for drawing greater benefits from the fisheries resources of their exclusive economic zones (EEZs). In determining their individual development objectives, small island developing States can draw benefit from improved exchange of information with other islands sharing similar problems.

9. Acknowledging the central place of the 1994 Barbados Global Conference on Sustainable Development in Small Island Developing States, the present Plan of Action provides a basis for activities in support of sustainable agricultural development in small island developing States* as a follow-up to the World Food Summit. Actions and policies are designed in particular (a) to prepare the small island developing States for participation in multilateral trade negotiations on agriculture, with a focus on the impact on agricultural trade and the future role of regional trading arrangements involving small island developing States in the multilateral trading system; (b) to develop priority programmes for sustainable, intensified and diversified agricultural production, forestry and fisheries; and (c) to address problems related to natural resource management and protection of the environment. While building on the framework defined by the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and World Food Summit Plan of Action, the present Plan of Action is focused on the specific needs of small island developing States.

10. The international community, comprising the United Nations system, including FAO with its mandate in food and agriculture, special international arrangements, such as the Lomé Convention, bilateral agencies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, has a key role to play in supporting the implementation of this Plan of Action. Such support could facilitate the adoption of appropriate national policies and, where necessary and appropriate, provide technical and financial assistance to help small island developing States in fostering food security.

* These are the 30 small island developing States and low-lying coastal States that are members of AOSIS and of FAO (Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cape Verde, Comoros, Cook Islands, Cuba, Cyprus, Dominica, Fiji, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Jamaica, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Vanuatu) and three non-AOSIS island States that are members of FAO (Bahrain, Dominican Republic and Haiti).

I. Adjusting to changes in the global trading environment

Basis for action

11. Most small island developing States are net agricultural importers. As a group they are net exporters by a narrow margin and their agricultural exports tend to be highly concentrated in a small number of commodities and markets. While the international trading system has not given small island developing States any particular consideration as a group, most of them receive preferential access to the major developed country markets for selected commodities through special arrangements such as the European Union's Lomé Convention for Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific (ACP); and the United States of America's Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI); and/or through the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) for developing countries. The benefits accruing from the various preferential trading schemes are concentrated among a few countries and a few commodities, and in many cases the small island developing States have not been able to fully exploit the opportunities available to them.

12. Most small island developing States do not have a comparative advantage in agricultural production overall, however the trade patterns of several of them show a comparative advantage in particular agricultural commodities, and in fishery and forestry products. There is an untapped knowledge base in developing countries, not only with regard to agricultural exports but also to import substitution, and there are successful examples of export diversification and growth from among the small island developing States. Under Lomé IV and other international agreements of interest to small island developing States, provisions are made for technical assistance not only for raising the general awareness of the agreements but also for the development and diversification of products for export in order to expand the benefits from the agreements.

13. The trade liberalization that is occurring as a result of the Uruguay Round Agreement on Agriculture will have important consequences for the small island developing States, bringing new challenges and offering fresh opportunities. Small island developing States exports will experience an erosion in tariff preferences and will face stiffer competition. On the other hand, the Uruguay Round opens up opportunities both in primary commodities as well as in higher value processed products for low-cost competitive producers, including many of the small island developing States. In this regard FAO has an important role

to play in providing its members with technical assistance concerning the wide range of Uruguay Round-related issues.

14. The small island developing States that are most dependent on agricultural exports for a significant part of their export earnings have suffered from a long-run decline in real world market prices and a slow growth in world demand for their major agricultural products. Because of the high reliance of their agricultural exports on preferential agreements, small island developing States are exposed to some risks from multilateral trade liberalization, and some of them fear that the coming round of negotiations will increase their exposure to such risks. This would in turn affect their import capacity, including food.

Objectives and actions

15. **Objective 1.1. To respond to the new challenges.** To this end, Governments, in partnership with all actors of civil society and with the support of international institutions, will, as appropriate:

(a) Conduct a thorough assessment of the implications of the Uruguay Round for agriculture and food security, so as to be able to identify both the short-term adjustments and a long-term strategy to deal with the expected changes;

(b) Review national food production policies in the light of the Uruguay Round and formulate policy responses to the emerging challenges;

(c) Identify and analyse new opportunities for national agriculture as world trade in agricultural products becomes increasingly free and competitive;

(d) Exploit, if applicable, the provisions made for technical assistance under preferential and multilateral arrangements in favour of developing countries.

16. **Objective 1.2. To undertake short-term adjustments.** To this end, Governments, in partnership with all actors of civil society and with the support of international institutions, will, as appropriate:

(a) Seek to take full advantage of the Uruguay Round openings and of current preferential trade opportunities;

(b) Seek to overcome any eventual underutilization of the commodity protocols and seek to capture a greater share of the preferential margins;

(c) Seek to negotiate better access terms to products of which most favoured nation (MFN) tariff rates in the developed markets continue to be high, even after the Uruguay Round.

17. **Objective 1.3. To raise competitiveness in agricultural exports.** To this end, Governments, in partnership with all actors of civil society and with the support of international institutions, will, as appropriate:

(a) Undertake in-depth studies on their comparative advantage in the production and export of agricultural products, including diversification possibilities in fast-growing commodities and markets, as well as in higher value processed products;

(b) Promote the production of non-traditional agricultural commodities with good export potential;

(c) Consider lessons learned from other countries that have successfully transformed the composition of their trade from mostly primary commodities to more diversified exports;

(d) Establish a market and trade information system that helps producers and traders in taking better informed marketing decisions.

II. Towards a more intensified, diversified and sustainable agriculture

Basis for action

18. Agriculture in many small island developing States is characterized by a combination of large-scale commercial production of a limited number of export crops and a traditional smallholder sector often dominated by women-headed households which produces food crops primarily for local consumption. That structure is changing, driven by new developments in world markets, trade imbalances and the quest for food security. Limited land area, the paucity of soils suitable for agriculture, the expansion of tourism, increasing urbanization and availability of convenience foods have adversely affected the production of traditional food and led to increases in food imports. Typical constraints faced by producers include inadequate infrastructure, including transport, to support increased and diversified production, a shortage of labour, poor quality and availability of planting material, a lack of efficient pest control and monitoring programmes, post-harvest losses, poor animal health and high cost of purchased feed and of chemical inputs, and weaknesses in both domestic and export marketing. Agricultural research,

mainly government-funded, is constrained by very limited human and financial resources and tends to be oriented to cash crops. It is weakly linked to extension, the farmer and other sectors such as agro-processing and tourism.

19. Faced with the challenge of global competitiveness, small island developing States are looking for opportunities to diversify their economies, especially the agricultural sector, in order to maintain and/or increase their degree of food security and self-reliance by exploiting their resource base more rationally and sustainably. A more holistic approach, to which the normative and operational activities of FAO can make substantive contributions, is needed. This would include, *inter alia*, interdisciplinary studies of ecosystem conservation and management, optimization of mixed crop, tree and animal production systems, including aquaculture, assessment of indigenous knowledge and traditional production systems, and development of appropriate technologies for high and/or low potential areas, including post-harvest processing and marketing. In the new trade environment created by the Uruguay Round Agreement on Agriculture and by changing conditions in food markets in importing countries, small island developing States will have to pay much more attention to the diversification of agricultural commodities into new products (both primary and processed), the quality of their export products (fruit and vegetables, fish, traditional crops such as coconut products) and to regularity of supplies, including meeting the demand created by the tourist sector.

20. Several non-traditional agricultural commodities, particularly but not exclusively in the horticultural area, are among the fast-growing commodities exported by developing countries, including the small island developing States, to the developed country markets. Exports have grown rapidly in recent years for a number of reasons, which include consumer preferences and rising incomes, as well as the ability of supplying countries to raise their capacity to supply adequate amounts of these commodities at competitive prices. A recent FAO study has shown additional export opportunities for these products as a result of the Uruguay Round.

21. Small island developing States in general have a potential for the production of tropical fruits (e.g. papaya, plantain, mango, pineapple, watermelon, etc.), tuber/root crops (e.g. taro, yams, sweet potato, cassava), nuts and spices (e.g. canarium nut, Brazil nut, terminalia nut, vanilla, black pepper), vegetables and cut flowers. The potential for diversification and intensification of these new crops, possibly under organic farming where appropriate, for niche markets remains largely to be explored, possibly with FAO assistance.

Objectives and actions

22. **Objective 2.1. To create an enabling environment for agricultural intensification and diversification.** To this end, Governments in partnership with all actors of civil society and with the support of international institutions, will, as appropriate:

(a) Ensure that supporting services to agriculture, such as agricultural research, extension, credit and market information, are in place to allow domestic producers to respond to the new challenges;

(b) Provide an appropriate legal and regulatory framework conducive for the private sector to take initiative;

(c) Pursue agricultural policies that facilitate the adoption of new technologies and support efforts to improve production with a special focus on small producers and family farms;

(d) Pursue policies aimed at improving agricultural productivity and intensifying production of agricultural commodities, diversification into new products (both primary and processed), as well as developing new end uses;

(e) Develop agricultural, trade and marketing policy frameworks that positively affect farmers' decisions about sustainable and intensified farming practices, including diversification, where appropriate;

(f) Review ongoing research and extension programmes with a view to their relevance to the overall objectives for agricultural development and ensure interaction with major groups of users, men and women alike;

(g) Strengthen, where required, normative and control/management activities in the areas of animal and plant health and safety in conformity with the Agreement on the Application on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and other relevant international agreements;

(h) Recognize explicitly the roles and specific constraints of women-headed and women-supported farm households.

23. **Objective 2.2. To remove production constraints.** To this end, Governments, in partnership with all actors of civil society and with the support of international institutions, will, as appropriate:

(a) Build a strong seed programme that includes the development of regional technical capability for seed supply, the development of appropriate seed policy, development of a germplasm information network to link up separate islands and bridge information gaps in the region;

(b) Review pest control strategies that are based mainly on the use of pesticides with a view to shift to the practice of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), as an alternative strategy for effective and environmentally safe pest control;

(c) Promote integrated production systems, including integrated plant nutrition systems, soil conservation methods and organic agriculture with a view to enhance soil fertility and maximize the use of locally available nutrients; such systems and methods should, when relevant, build upon farmers' own experiences and indigenous knowledge;

(d) Investigate the use of available renewable energy, and promote energy-saving techniques and waste recycling and recovery, as alternative nutrients and energy sources;

(e) Promote irrigation where technically feasible and economically, socially and environmentally viable;

(f) Promote water harvesting and run-off farming techniques in arid or semi-arid areas;

(g) Assess, where applicable, the scope for appropriate levels of mechanization to overcome problems associated with high cost of labour and labour shortages;

(h) Improve, where applicable, productivity of small-scale poultry and pig production by promoting locally available feeds, diversify through introduction of alternate livestock, such as ducks and pigeons and integration of livestock into mixed farming, tree crop and aquaculture systems;

(i) Strengthen animal health services and promote specific disease eradication programmes (e.g. Tropical Bont Tick in the Caribbean);

(j) Strengthen the sustainability and profitability of existing farming systems using participatory research and extension.

24. **Objective 2.3. To improve domestic and export marketing and processing.** To this end, Governments, in partnership with all actors of civil society and with the support of international institutions, will, as appropriate:

(a) Establish adequate food quality control mechanisms at producer, processor and government levels to ensure conformity with basic standards, such as those prescribed by the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission;

(b) Develop a network for the dissemination of information and data concerning world market conditions and trends for small island developing States agricultural export products;

(c) Review, as appropriate, the roles and functions of marketing boards and consider the building of strategic alliances with market participants (producer/exporter/importer alliances);

(d) Review and assess the adequacy of domestic marketing infrastructure with a view to identifying investment needs for the public and/or private sector and to meet the requirements and quality standards including for the tourist sector;

(e) Encourage, where appropriate, the use of traditional and underutilized food crops and fish resources;

(f) Develop and promote improved food processing, preservation and storage to reduce post-harvest food losses.

III. Meeting fisheries needs

Basis for action

25. Small island developing States have particular fisheries needs. The sustainable use of fisheries resources is essential to ensure continuing supplies of food for island populations and for economic development, including employment opportunities. The long-term sustainability of the fisheries sector is threatened by overexploitation of living marine resources, toxic waste dumping and pollution, and other degradation of coastal habitats, as well as lack of effective surveillance mechanisms at both national and regional level.

26. It is increasingly recognized that conventional approaches to fisheries conservation and management have failed to achieve sustainable resource use in small island developing States and that traditional management practice, which acted to regulate resource access and exploitation by user groups might be used to support conservation and management efforts. A number of small island developing States have benefited from promotion of sports and other fisheries that are an integral component of ecotourism. Usually, such fisheries yield significantly higher financial returns than commercial fisheries that might target the same stocks.

27. In general, inshore capture fisheries adjacent to centres of urban population are heavily fished, if not overfished, while inshore fisheries in outer islands tend to be only lightly exploited because of lower population densities and the paucity of market infrastructure to move product to urban markets. Where offshore capture fisheries and associated

processing provide major economic benefits, additional benefits could be secured from the exploitation of regional fish stocks. FAO directly, or through the Regional Fish Marketing Information and Technical Advisory Services, is providing marketing information and contact with potential buyers. Both inshore and offshore marine capture fisheries are central to tourism in small island developing States. In some of the island countries, inland capture fisheries contribute in a significant way to food security and provide economic opportunities for self-employment, often for women.

28. Factors that constrain the development and management of the fisheries sector in island States include, *inter alia*, a lack of institutional strength and capacity on the part of the public sector, complexities associated with improving inshore fisheries management; high post-harvest losses, owing to poor fish handling, marketing and processing; inadequate safety regulations and systems for fishers, especially those that operate beyond the immediate inshore areas inhibit a better distribution of fishing effort; underdeveloped national fishing industries. Most small island developing States have yet to realize their full potential for the development of aquaculture and inland fisheries. In particular, measures to promote sustainable aquaculture and reef enhancement are required, while ensuring that inland capture fisheries are harvested in a rational manner. As a means of strengthening national capacity in the fisheries sector, the merits of international cooperation among different groups of small island developing States are recognized and encouraged by FAO.

29. An important policy consideration for all small island developing States where there is significant offshore fishing, either within areas of national jurisdiction or on the high seas, is the need to secure additional benefits from the exploitation of fish stocks that occur in their region. Some island States have taken progressive measures to increase their economic linkages with offshore fisheries, *inter alia*, by encouraging the development of national fleets, either through direct investment in vessels or through flag changes. In addition, steps have been taken by some island States to facilitate the use of their ports, and where necessary, to make the generation of secondary economic benefits (e.g. the transshipment of fish in port rather than at sea) conditional on fishing access to their EEZs for both those island States and the foreign fleets. These measures, in many instances, have turned out to be mutually beneficial for both the island States and the foreign fleets. The importance of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Kyoto Plan of Action, the International Coral Reef Initiative and chapter 17 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development's Agenda 21 in the development of a relevant policy framework for sustainable development of the fisheries of small island developing States is to be stressed.

Objectives and actions

30. **Objective 3.1. To improve EEZ fisheries conservation and management**. To this end, Governments, in partnership with actors of civil society, and with the support of international institutions, will, as appropriate:

(a) Promote innovative approaches to management that build on traditional institutions and conservation and management knowledge and practice; where applicable, promote community-based fishery management with all socio-economic groups concerned;

(b) Pursue a coordinated set of policies that might address, for example, gender relevant training and extension needs, new vessel design, finance and the need of new port facilities;

(c) Study the feasibility of relocating inshore fisheries effort for the offshore, that is, away from heavily exploited inshore fisheries, and take steps to improve the fishers' knowledge about safety at sea;

(d) Pursue policies that promote private investment, the setting up of fair and development oriented fishing agreements and, where appropriate, joint ventures with foreign fishing groups, and that strengthen the economic role of national fisheries industries;

(e) Take steps to implement the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and to ratify and accept respectively, the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement and the Compliance Agreement, and implement them;

(f) Strengthen and establish, as needed, appropriate regional and subregional fisheries management organizations or arrangements for the effective surveillance and monitoring of fisheries activities.

31. **Objective 3.2. To enhance aquaculture development and inland fisheries**. To this end, Governments, in collaboration with the international scientific communities, in both the public and private sectors, as appropriate, will:

(a) Introduce or strengthen aquaculture and inland fisheries where feasible and appropriate;

(b) Ensure that aquaculture practices are compatible with their ecosystems;

(c) Establish networks to facilitate exchanges of technical information.

32. **Objective 3.3. To improve post-harvest fish management, marketing and processing**. To this end, Governments, in partnership with actors of civil society, and with the support of international institutions, will, as appropriate:

(a) Assess domestic market prospects and identify export potentials for fish and fish products;

(b) Assess the requirements for fish handling, processing and marketing equipment and installations;

(c) Identify investment needs required for efficient fish marketing and processing operations and prepare feasibility studies.

IV. Ensuring sustainable management of land, water and forestry resources and environmental protection

Basis for action

33. Small island developing States, as recognized by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Agenda 21, are a special case for both environment and development. The land area available for productive purposes is limited, which intensifies competition among alternative land use options. In low-lying coastal areas, land well suited for agriculture is under severe pressure from expanding housing, tourism and other economic activities. Where land is under customary ownership, land-use planning involves many stakeholders and decision makers, which poses specific constraints. Water resources are generally scarce. Climate variability and change and sea-level rise and vulnerability to natural disasters are of particular concern. FAO will support national programmes to enable farmers to make better crop and soil management choices, thus minimizing risks from climate variability and optimizing economic returns, while protecting the natural resource base.

34. Because of the relatively small areas involved, concern for overutilization of forest resources has not attracted much attention. The widespread destruction of protective forests in critical watershed areas has resulted in environmental degradation, critical impairment of water supply and damage to coastal/marine habitats and natural resources. Biological diversity and endemic ecosystems are also at risk. On most small islands, distances between highlands and coastal areas tend to be short and the role of forest ecosystems as regulators for the island environment and protection of the lowlands, human settlements and infrastructure is especially critical. By extension, the sustainability of agricultural productivity and potential greatly depends on the regulating function of forests.

35. The continental shelves and coastal ecosystems of small island developing States are of major economic significance for settlement, subsistence and commercial agriculture, fisheries and tourism. Demands on coastal resources are endangering the long-term supply of these resources: large parts of coastal areas are being polluted by local or upland sources, fisheries over-exploited and fish habitats degraded, coastal belt mangroves cut, wetlands drained, coral reefs destroyed, freshwater aquifers are subject to depletion and salinity, biodiversity conservation is threatened.

36. Geographic location and size render small island developing States particularly susceptible to inclemencies of weather (e.g. tropical storms, hurricanes, typhoons, droughts) and geological hazards (e.g. volcanic eruptions, seismic waves) because when damage occurs, it occurs on a national scale. Epidemics introduced from outside quickly devastate fragile ecosystems. Coastal erosion, as a result of tidal surges, sea waves and winds, is higher than in other countries because of relatively larger exposure of coasts in relation to land mass. The adverse impact of economic activities on the natural environment is felt more than in other countries. Modern information technologies and planning tools, including FAO's Global Information and Early Warning System, provide important elements for designing disaster-preparedness strategies.

Objectives and actions

37. **Objective 4.1. To promote the conservation and sustainable use of land and water resources and manage sustainably the forest resources**. To this end, Governments, in partnership with actors of civil society, and with the support of international institutions, will, as appropriate:

(a) Promote the adoption and implementation of a land and water-use planning approach, which takes into consideration the linkages and interactions between the various ecosystems and economic sectors;

(b) Pursue a holistic and integrated approach to the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources, taking into account the multiple role of forests and trees;

(c) Promote rehabilitation and conservation of forestlands and watersheds and, where necessary and

sustainable, upgrade the productive capacity of those resources and ensure sustainable forest management and sound harvesting practices;

(d) Combat land degradation and enhance coastal protection through, *inter alia*, intensified soil conservation, afforestation and reforestation activities;

(e) Promote agroforestry systems and the development of multi-purpose tree species which are resistant to pests, diseases and cyclones;

(f) Pursue integrated planning of both terrestrial and marine environments to prevent their degradation and to soundly utilize the full potential of the natural resource base, particularly for ecotourism.

38. **Objective 4.2. To enhance the environmental protection.** To this end, Governments, in partnership with actors of civil society, and with the support of international institutions, will, as appropriate:

(a) Strengthen the information basis for environmental monitoring and integrate environmental values and concerns into the development process;

(b) Prevent further degradation of critical marine habitats and resources through the establishment of marine parks and through the sound management of resources;

(c) Develop new or amend existing national legislation, as appropriate, to ensure that a comprehensive, updated and coordinated legal framework on natural resource management and environmental protection is in place;

(d) Enforce, ratify or conclude, as appropriate, international conventions, such as the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol; if required, adopt national legislation to implement those conventions and promote collaboration mechanisms for their implementation.

39. **Objective 4.3. To improve disaster preparedness.** To this end, Governments, in partnership with actors of civil society, and with the support of international institutions, will, as appropriate:

(a) Minimize the vulnerability to and impact of natural hazards, climate fluctuations, forest fires, pests and diseases through the formulation of disaster-preparedness and mitigation strategies;

(b) Promote measures to mitigate the impact of hurricanes and cyclones on agriculture and coastal fisheries; assess national meteorological and hydrological services with a view to improving their service capability of disaster prevention; support early warning systems at the national and regional levels;

(c) Undertake efforts to preserve mangrove areas which provide protection against tidal surges and storm damage;

(d) Develop and disseminate improved measures and techniques in the fisheries sector to reduce hurricane/cyclone impacts, such as destruction of landing sites, loss of boats, fishing gear and pots at sea through measures that might include construction of storm shelters, fishing jetties and mooring buoys and installation of storm warning systems.

V. Capacity-building and institution strengthening

Basis for action

40. The scarcity of skilled manpower and the weakness in institutional capacities are common constraints shared by small island developing States. Many administrations lack the full range of in-house expertise to respond to the changes required for effective implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action. Special efforts will be required to adjust to changes in the global trading environment and to promote the move towards a more diversified and intensified agriculture, while ensuring sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the environment. This calls for a pooling of the limited human resources through regional cooperation and institutions. National, regional and international institutions, including FAO, have an important role to play in this endeavour. Improved capacity to tap indigenous knowledge and increase access to imported technology will be beneficial to small island developing States.

41. The Uruguay Round Agreements present opportunities for countries to benefit from greater access to world markets by curbing past production and trade-distorting practices and by facilitating more competitive and fairer trade. Signatories to the Agreements also assume the obligation of complying with their provisions. In order to fulfil this obligation and take advantage of the new opportunities, it is essential that small island developing States develop their own capacity to examine, assess and evaluate their national circumstances in the context of the Agreements. Recognizing this, the World Food Summit Plan of Action called upon FAO and other international organizations to continue assisting

developing countries in preparing for future Multilateral Trade Negotiations (MTNs) scheduled to begin in 1999, including in agriculture, fisheries and forestry, *inter alia*, through studies, analysis and training.

42. Agricultural diversification requires a proactive, project-oriented and multidisciplinary approach to the development of efficient production/marketing linkages for the targeted non-traditional agricultural crops. At the national level, the Ministry of Agriculture, in particular, has a critical role to play in creating the environment for and facilitating the production of the non-traditional crops.

43. Skills of all actors (e.g. farmers, fishers, forest users, exporters, administrators and extension personnel, both men and women) need to be continuously upgraded through specialized training and capacity-building in agronomic, financial management and marketing expertise. Particularly extension staff requires a reorientation to commercial farm management with attention to be paid both to productivity improvement and better business planning and to related training of farmers in improved organizational and managerial skills. Awareness, communication and training on environmental management are needed for policy makers, managers and civil society groups (e.g. fishers' associations, rural communities). Training and institution-building will often be more effective if undertaken on a regional and subregional basis.

44. Databases, essential for planning purposes, are generally weak in small island developing States. Although the methodology for collecting, processing and analysing data for food and agriculture is available in most small island developing States, they lack adequate statistical organization and personnel, and coordination between statistical offices and economic analysis, planning and decision-making agencies. Particular attention should therefore be paid to establishing an institutional interdisciplinary framework. Additional data, new methods of data collection and information analysis, and appropriate tools to integrate environmental, social and economic considerations in decision-making are required. In these fields, interregional cooperation among small island developing States could be promoted through regional groupings and mechanisms. At the national level, FAO is currently involved with other United Nations agencies and partners in developing guidelines for national Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems, as requested by the World Food Summit. Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems include vulnerability indicators and mapping drawing on socio-economic, nutrition and environmental data.

Objectives and actions

45. **Objective 5.1. To develop and/or strengthen national capacities in the context of the Uruguay Round Agreement on Agriculture**. To this end, Governments, in partnership with all actors of civil society and with the support of international institutions, will, as appropriate:

(a) Strengthen, as appropriate, the administrative/legal capacity to meet the requirements of World Trade Organization (WTO) membership, including preparation of notifications, defending interests of national agriculture in the WTO, assessing the impact on agriculture of policy changes agreed upon at WTO, and developing systems of plant varietal protection;

(b) Build up national policy formulation capacity in agricultural, forestry, and fisheries sectors and adequate analytical capacity to assess the impact of policy changes being proposed at WTO;

(c) Strengthen the scientific, administrative and infrastructure capability to deal with food standards, plant and animal health inspection services and quality assurance requirements of exports and imports;

(d) Strengthen the capacity to prepare and negotiate in MTN rounds, including the preparation/revision of national schedules of commitments to the WTO, requiring additional skills and a forward-looking capacity in the concerned ministries.

46. **Objective 5.2. To strengthen the supporting services to agriculture.** To this end, Governments, in partnership with all actors of civil society and the international community, will, as appropriate:

(a) Strengthen agricultural research and extension, with a view to being able to better respond to new challenges facing the sector and to provide the focused crop-specific support required for agricultural intensification and diversification;

(b) Improve the availability and accessibility of credit, which is critical to promoting non-traditional commodities;

(c) Establish joint marketing services with strong private sector participation;

(d) Build up, as appropriate, national fisheries administrations and strengthen their fisheries conservation and management capacity;

(e) Strengthen national forest agencies and improve coordination among national forestry and related agencies

in their work and in relation to foreign funded assistance programmes;

(f) Ensure that women farmers' specific needs and requirements are adequately taken into account.

47. **Objective 5.3. To provide a coherent framework for sustainable natural resource management and environmental protection.** To this end, Governments, in partnership with all actors of civil society and with the support of international institutions, will, as appropriate:

(a) Provide, strengthen and ensure implementation of appropriate legislation on environmental protection and natural resource management, including land, water and forest resources, plant protection and animal health, climate change, desertification, biodiversity, wildlife and genetic resources, protected areas and critical habitats, integrated coastal area management and preservation of the marine environment, and the conservation and management of fisheries within areas under national jurisdiction and, where appropriate, on the high seas;

(b) Promote integrated approaches to natural resources management, in order to mitigate adverse intersectoral impacts; pursue work on the development of vulnerability indices and vulnerability mapping;

(c) Integrate national forest policies into a larger natural resources management framework at the national level;

(d) Discourage unsustainable agricultural practices, uncontrolled deforestation, destructive fishing practices and overfishing;

(e) Elaborate measures to mitigate biodiversity losses, making full use of local knowledge very often retained by women;

(f) Establish, as appropriate, relevant databases, information systems and support regional collaboration, including inter-island information and technology sharing.

VI. Implementing the Plan of Action

48. The implementation of the Plan of Action requires effective means to reflect the priority attached to sustainable food security and to the conservation and sustainable utilization and management of natural resources. To mobilize funding for national and regional development efforts, coordinated approaches should be followed, to the extent possible. Opportunities for introducing innovative financial mechanisms should be identified.

49. The resources required for investment will be generated mostly from domestic private and public sources. Governments should provide an economic and legal framework which provides efficient markets that encourage private sector mobilization of savings, investment and capital formation. Governments should devote an appropriate proportion of their expenditures to investments which enhance sustainable food security. Governments should also strengthen investments in areas of common interest, such as appropriate technology generation through collaborative research and transfer, as well as to share investment experience and best practices.

50. The international community has a key role to play in supporting the adoption of appropriate national policies and in providing technical and financial assistance. Such assistance should take account of the specific needs and priorities, at national, regional and subregional levels as outlined in the Plan of Action. International non-governmental organizations could make a useful contribution by collaborating with local non-governmental organizations working in small island developing States. In some small island developing States, foreign direct investment (FDI) and other private financial flows provide an important source of external resources. Official development assistance (ODA) is of critical importance for countries and sectors left aside by other external sources of finance.

51. International financial institutions, regional development banks and other regional and subregional organizations should be encouraged to increase their technical and, as appropriate, financial assistance including, when suitable, either as a grant or at highly concessional terms to small island developing States at the community, national and subregional levels, including through mechanisms that can provide small-scale grants and microenterprise loans. Since global environmental problems, particularly with regard to climate change, biological diversity and international waters, are of great significance and concern to small island developing States, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which provides concessional funding in these areas, should pay due attention to the special needs and requirements of those countries.

52. In recognition of the particular constraints that the small island developing States are facing and with a view to changes in the global trade environment, the major thrust of the actions proposed is on: (a) support of agricultural intensification and diversification; (b) meeting specific fisheries needs; (c) sustainable use of natural resources, environmental protection and disaster preparedness; and (d) capacity-building and institution strengthening.

53. Adjusting to changes in the global trading system would be supported through assistance in assessing the implications of the Uruguay Round on domestic agriculture, formulating policy responses to the emerging challenges, in-depth studies on the national comparative advantage in the production and export of agricultural products. Support would be provided to the establishment of a market and trade information system.

54. Projects in support of agricultural intensification and diversification would promote small-scale irrigation where feasible, promote improved cultivation practices and small animal production. The roles and specific constraints of women-headed farm households would be addressed. The strengthening of supporting services would emphasize well-focused adoptive research and extension, ensuring the availability of quality seed and planting material and improving pest and disease control systems. Under a policy framework providing incentives for the private sector to take initiative, particular emphasis would be on improving the domestic marketing infrastructure, including the strengthening of quarantine, quality control and inspection systems.

55. Meeting fisheries needs would largely be through projects in support of community-based fishery management, improving shore facilities for industrial fisheries, exploiting the potential for aquaculture development, improving inland fisheries and overcome constraints in fish marketing and processing. Regional and subregional collaboration and the setting up of joint-venture fishing enterprises would be supported.

56. Projects in support of sustainable use of natural resources and environmental protection would address integrated land use planning, soil conservation and watershed management. A major thrust would be on rehabilitation and conservation of forestlands. Projects would also address the degradation of critical marine habitats and strengthen the databases for environmental monitoring. Improving disaster preparedness would be mainly through assistance in designing and promoting mitigating measures and support to early warning systems at the national and regional levels.

57. Apart from strengthening the national capacities in the context of Uruguay Round Agreement on Agriculture, through technical assistance and training, including that offered by FAO, WTO, the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), capacity-building projects would promote the move towards a more intensified, diversified and sustainable agriculture. Support would be provided to national fisheries administrations to improve their fisheries conservation and management capacity and to forest administrations, with a view to improving forest management and integrating national forest policies into a larger natural resources management framework at national level. Support would also be provided to the development of vulnerability indices and vulnerability mapping and to other relevant databases to be taken into account in the build-up of national capabilities.

58. Since implementation of the present Plan of Action will be within the framework of World Food Summit follow-up, Governments, in partnership with all sectors of civil society and in coordination with relevant international institutions and in conformity with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/36 on the follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits, will undertake special efforts to strengthen national monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and include reporting on measures taken and on progress achieved as part of their obligations under the follow-up to the World Food Summit. The implementation of the Plan of Action will also contribute to the fulfilment of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of small island developing States.